In Memorium: Dr. Fazlur Rahman (1919-1988)
Author(s): Muhammad Khalid Masud, Ali Raza Naqvi and Seyyed Hossein Nasr
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IN MEMORIUM

DR. FAZLUR RAHMAN
(1919-1988)

LIFE IN BRIEF

Birth Date	:	September 21, 1919
1940	:	B.A. (Hons) in Arabic, Panjab University, Lahore.
1942	:	M.A. (Arabic), First class first, Panjab University.
1943-46	:	Research Student, Panjab University.
1946-1949	:	Oxford University.
1949	:	D. Phi. Oxford University on *Avicenna's Psychology*.
1950-1958	:	Lecturer in Persian Studies and Islamic Philosophy at Durham University, England.
1958-1961	:	Associate Professor, Institute of Islamic Studies, McGill University, Montreal, Canada.
1961-1962	:	Visiting Professor, Central Institute of Islamic Research, Karachi, Pakistan.
1962-1968	:	Director, Central Institute of Islamic Research.
1969	:	Visiting Professor, Spring Term, University of California, Los Angeles, USA.
1969-1988	:	Professor, University of Chicago, USA.
Death Date	:	July 26, 1988.

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WORKS (SELECTED LIST)*

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1958 : *Prophecy in Islam*, London.

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1965 : *Islamic Methodology in History*, Karachi.

1967 : *Islam*, London and New York

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1975 : *Philosophy of Mulla Sadra*, State University of New York Press.

1979 : *Prophecy in Islam*, Second Imprint, University of Chicago.

1979 : *Islam*, Second Edition, University of Chicago.

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* The *Islamic Studies* is thankful to Professor C.M. Naim of Chicago University, Professor Gerhard Bowering of Yale University, and Mr. Bruce D. Craig, Bibliographer for Middle East Studies, University of Chicago for providing details of Dr. Fazlur Rahman's Curriculum Vitae. This is, however, not a complete list of his works.

(Editor)

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OBITUARY NOTES

Fazlur Rahman [Faḍl al-Rḥmān] was born in Pakistan in the Hazara district on 21st September 1919. His was a religious family. His father Mawlānā Shahāb al-dīn was a graduate from Dār al-ʿUlūm, Deōband, where he studied with Mawlānā Rashīd Ahmad Gangōhī and Shaykh al-Hind Mawlānā Maḥmud al-Ḥasan. Deōband's commitment to Islam, freedom and reform were inculcated by Mawlānā Shahāb al-dīn in his son Fazlur Rahman. Fazlur Rahman began his traditional studies in Dars-i-Niẓāmī with his father at a very early age. However, Mawlānā Shahābuddīn also got him admitted in a school in the modern system of education. By the time he completed his school education, the family had moved to Lahore. In Lahore he continued his Dars-i-Niẓāmī studies at home along with pursuing his University Studies and received B.A. (Hons) in Arabic in 1940 from the Panjab University. It was probably owing to this rigorous training in Dars-i-Niẓāmī, besides his native brilliance, that he stood first class first in M.A. Arabic in Panjab University in 1942. Arabic language remained his strong point in the later years of his scholarly life.

In 1946 he went to England for his Ph.D at the Oxford University. He chose to work on Ibn Sina's treatise on Psychology. He studied both Philosophy and Psychology in order to do justice to the treatise. His sense of perfection also led him to study classical Greek and Latin.

In addition to that he also studied German and French languages. Despite these extra studies, Fazlur Rahman completed his Ph.D. studies within 3 years in 1949. This unusually hard work affected his health, especially his eyesight. The appreciation of his work by the academicians was a great reward for him.

After a long span of work in the reputed institutions of learning in England, Canada and Pakistan, Fazlur Rahman joined University of Chicago in 1969 as Professor of Islamic Thought and remained there till his death in July 1988. Muslims of America looked towards him for intellectual guidance and inspiration. In April 1988 in a public seminar organised by the University of Massachusetts at Amherst, on the "Muslims of America" a full panel was devoted to Dr. Fazlur Rahman's intellectual contribution.

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While expressing our grief on the death of an outstanding scholar, a colleague and a former Director of this Institute, we pray:

> O God we ask forgiveness for our living, for our dead,
> for the present, for the absent,
> for our young, for our old,
> for our males, for our females.
>
> O God, let us abide by Islam as long as we live, and let us breathe our last with the belief that Allah is the only God to worship and Muḥammad is the last of His Messengers.

Muhammad Khalid Masud

Dr. Fazlur Rahman was a serious scholar, a devoted teacher, an honest researcher, and whenever invested with authority, kind and compassionate towards his subordinates. In his capacity as the Director of this Institute, he was ever willing to guide and assist the researchers. He would extend every possible help in arranging for the necessary materials needed for research, and would provide all possible facilities for training and specialisation in various fields of Islamic research.

Dr. Fazlur Rahman was an exceptionally well-read man. He had a profound and deep study of the various fields of Islamic learning, particularly Islamic philosophy, law and jurisprudence, history and political thought. Although he had not studied Economics as a subject, he had a clear perception of the Islamic point of view regarding different economic problems which is evident from his lucid exposition of the Islamic stand point on economic problems. His opinions and judgements were invariably supported by concrete evidence from the authoritative sources of Islam.

In studying books and other academic materials, Dr. Fazlur Rahman had an exceptionally sharp and quick memory and astounding power of retention of whatever he would happen to read. Strangely enough, in purely mundane matters or matters relating to rather poor memory and he was wont to forget even some important things relating to the daily routine of his life.

His mode of reading was also very strange and rare. He would go through the reading material very quickly, as if instead of reading horizontally he read things vertically. But he would commit to his memory and retain whatever useful material passed through his extremely weak eyes which required double glasses to read.

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Dr. Fazlur Rahman considered the knowledge of all relevant languages a pre-requisite for research. Therefore, besides English, Arabic and Persian over which he had full command, he also knew a number of European languages. The knowledge of these languages proved very helpful in the acquisition of the bulk of material available in those languages in the fields of Dr. Fazlur Rahman's interest.

Basically a scholar of philosophy, Dr. Fazlur Rahman seemed influenced by the style of German philosophers. He used to write long and complex sentences, and, like Macaulay, used a very difficult and terse language which was mostly beyond the comprehension of ordinary readers. There is an interesting story related by himself which reflects the impression of general readers about his writings. The late Field Marshal Ayub Khan, in the later days of his regime, asked Dr. Fazlur Rahman to write a book on the Ideology of Islam. Dr. Fazlur Rahman completed the first chapter of the book, and with the hope of winning laurels from his great patron, he took the chapter to the Field Marshal. The Field Marshal cast a cursory glance over a few pages of the book, and forwarded it to Mr. Altaf Gowhar, his chief advisor in such matters, saying? "Altaf, could you please translate it into English!"

He has to his credit a number of important works in the field of Islamic thought, especially philosophy, jurisprudence, and culture. He wrote a number of significant and stimulating books on Islam especially during the last few years of his life and was expected to produce more at this stage of life thanks to more than fifty years of study and reflection, he had possessed a rare insight into the entire treasure of Islamic learning. But his life was cut short by his sudden death, depriving the scholastic world of many valuable works which undoutedly lay unborn in his mind.

Ali Raza Naqvi
Islamabad

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CONDOLENCE MESSAGE

The passing away of an accomplished scholar is always an occasion for sadness especially today when there is so much tendency to gloss over the surface and to not delve deeply into various fields of scholarship dealing with Islamic studies. Dr. Fazlur Rahman was a modernist interpreter of Islam with many of whose thesis a follower of the traditional Islamic perspective could not agree. But he was also a fine scholar, master of traditional texts of Islamic thought and meticulous teacher whose method of instruction and approach to the study of the main writings of the Islamic intellectual tradition were much closer to the methods of that tradition than his modernistic interpretation of certain ideas would indicate. His passing away is a loss for the world of scholarship especially for those concerned with bringing out the basic issues that have been born from the confrontation of Islam with the modern world. May God grant him peace and shower his mercy upon him.

Seyyed Hossein Nasr
Washington

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